

IS IT THE FLU ... OR A COLD? HOW TO TELL AND WHAT TO DO



Cold and flu are two types of illnesses caused by viruses that get into the nose, throat, and lungs. But colds and flu are caused by different viruses. It is important to remember that antibiotics will not cure either a cold or the flu.

The flu bug is usually worse than the common cold. The fever, body aches, extreme tiredness, and dry cough that come with flu are more intense than anything connected with the cold.

Eight ways to tell if it's cold ... or flu

Colds are generally centered around the nose, whereas the flu is characterized by "all-over" events. People with colds have a runny or stuffy nose, or maybe a cough and that's about it. Colds don't usually lead to any other serious health problems, but the flu – short for influenza – can be more serious or even deadly. Here are some ways to tell the difference:

1. **Fever** – May occur with a cold but is generally milder than the fevers associated with the flu. Adults often have low-grade fevers of 100°F to 102°F. Children with the flu may have higher temperatures that last three to four days.
2. **Headache** – Don't expect one when you have a cold, but they often come with the flu.
3. **General aches and pains** – With a cold, they're mild. With the flu, the aches and pains can be severe.
4. **Tired and weak feeling** – Sometimes a cold will make you feel "washed out" for a few days. People with the flu often have that feeling for two or three weeks.
5. **Extreme exhaustion** – It's rare with a cold, but when the flu starts, it usually hits you like a ton of bricks.
6. **Stuffy nose and sneezing** – Both cold and flu can cause you to be all stopped up.

7. **Sore throat** – It's more common with a cold but sometimes comes with the flu.

8. **Chest discomfort and cough** – Expect a hacking cough with a cold. When you have the flu, the coughing is more severe.

Flu shots

There is still no cure for the common cold, but a flu vaccine can often protect you from influenza. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends an annual flu vaccine for anyone wanting to reduce the risk of getting the flu, but it is especially important for those who are at high risk for complications from the flu:

- People aged 50 years and older
- Residents of nursing homes or long-term care facilities
- All children and adults ages 6 months to 19
- Women who will be pregnant during flu season
- Adults and children ages 6 months and older with conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart or kidney disease, or weakened immune systems

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- People with a condition that makes it hard to breathe or swallow, such as brain injury or disease, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, or other nerve or muscle disorders

Also, people who live with or care for those at high risk for complications, such as healthcare workers, household contacts, and out-of-home caregivers (including those who care for children younger than 6 months old since they are too young to be vaccinated), should get vaccinated annually.

Prevention methods

These additional tips can help stop the spread of cold and flu viruses:

- [Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer](#) often.
- [Avoid close contact](#) with others who have a cold or the flu.
- Don't [cover your sneezes and coughs](#) with your bare hands. Use a tissue and throw it away.
- Keep your [hands away from your face](#). Touching your face can spread viruses to your nose, eyes, or mouth.
- [Drink plenty of fluids](#). Water flushes out your system.
- Get enough [rest](#). Colds and flu hit you hard if you're run down.
- [Don't smoke](#). Heavy smokers get more colds, and the colds tend to be more severe.
- [Get fresh air](#). Cold outside temperatures don't cause colds or the flu. Instead, during cold months, people stay indoors where more germs are spread in dry rooms.

Talk to your doctor about a pneumococcal vaccine

Pneumococcal diseases can lead to illnesses such as pneumonia. Those 65 and older, smokers 19-64, and those 2-64 with a chronic medical or immune condition are at highest risk.

Visit the Condition Centers

For more information, talk to your doctor and visit MyHumana at [Humana.com](https://www.humana.com) to check your benefits and visit the Flu and Pneumonia Condition Center.

Bottom line

With an ounce of prevention and a little luck, you might dodge common viruses this season. But if you get the latest bug that's going around, a careful look at the symptoms can usually tell you if it's a cold or the flu.

Source: www.cdc.gov

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